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ABSTRACT

Findings from California's Statewide Longitudinal Study (SLS) of community college students are reviewed in terms of their implications for student personnel services. Following a background discussion of counselor functions and training and an overview of current concerns in counseling, guidance, and student placement, the paper examines the inferences of the SLS data and makes recommendations with respect to eight issues. These are: (1) student attrition and retention; (2) differentiated counseling programs for day and evening students; (3) the costs and benefits of student assessment programs; (4) student employment and job placement assistance; (5) in-service education to help academically oriented counselors serve vocationally oriented students; (6) the contributions of the SLS's prototype system for classifying students in a useful manner; (7) the effectiveness of the SLS's sampling techniques; and (8) the improvement of vocational curricula through, for example, different day and evening programs and short-term, skill-oriented courses. Finally, 12 summary recommendations are presented, covering counselor credentialing; further use of student prototype information; methods of computing average daily attendance; open-entry/open-exit courses; fee charges for leisure courses; short-term vocational curricula; different day/evening curricula; and the development of research, articulation, and in-service education models. (KL)

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STATEWIDE LONGITUDINAL STUDY

IMPLICATIONS

FOR

COUNSELING, GUIDANCE AND STUDENT PLACEMENT

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April 1, 1982

Louis Quint

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STATEWIDE LONGITUDINAL STUDY

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING, GUIDANCE, AND STUDENT PLACEMENT

BACKGROUND

The legal basis of counseling and guidance in the California Community Colleges resides with Title V of the California Administrative Code. Section 51500 states that community colleges "shall have established procedures..." Section 51501 states that "the counseling services shall assist each student in the college in the following ways: to determine his educational goal; to make a self appraisal toward progress toward his goals."

There are more than 1,000 professional counselors in California's community colleges. Requirements for the credential include a master's degree or its equivalent with emphasis on counseling, guidance, student personnel, psychology or social welfare. The counseling credential authorizes the provision of the following services:

1. Guidance and counseling of students in the planning of their immediate or future vocational and career plans.
2. Guidance and counseling of students in resolving problems arising out of their education and career plans other than providing tutoring services.
3. Consultation with students on personal problems and assistance in resolving these problems to the extent that the problems do not require psychiatric or medical investigation or treatment or the practice of law.

WHAT COUNSELORS DO

Today's counselor must be equipped with current information, communication skills, career development knowledge, referral contacts, expert counseling techniques, and a high degree of sensitivity to personal, social or cultural needs.

A counselor's activities include, but are not limited to: educational, career and personal counseling; teaching guidance classes and coordinating with institutions; assisting in the orientation and registration of students; providing for student testing when appropriate; referring students to other programs at the college or in the community; providing counseling to special groups of students such as reentering older adults, international and bilingual students, the disadvantaged and disabled; providing counseling in the evening, weekend and outreach locations; assisting in the retention and follow-up of students; and personal and program growth activities.

Counseling reflects the objectives of the community college and the unique worth of each individual. It is an attempt to prepare the student for life-long learning and expand the process of career development, skills development and job retraining, educational and vocational planning, personal growth, and self-understanding. The manner in which these services are organized and performed varies with each college. It varies in response to differences in student needs. The location, size and physical facilities; academic, occupational and special programs and services provided; and the abilities and talents of counseling personnel.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Articulation. Students who plan to transfer to other colleges must have accurate information regarding the admissions, general education, and

major field requirements of the other college, as well as what courses at the present college satisfy these requirements. This task is complicated by the fact that requirements and curricula in all colleges are constantly changing. Articulation is thus a continual process that should be formalized.

Career Counseling: Assists students in evaluation of career goals. Career counseling involves aspirations, levels of motivation, interests, abilities and opportunities. It includes assistance to students in becoming aware of changes in occupations, job requirements, and employment prospects. Involved is provision for job-learning experiences off campus, as well as knowledge of training facilities and programs offered by the college.

Educational Counseling: Assists students in planning immediate and long-range educational objectives. The student is helped in a program of educational exploration to develop the capability of decision-making appropriate for course selection in achieving his goals. This process is the logical extension of career counseling.

Student Assessment: Service needed to consider achievements, abilities and personality characteristics for increased development of student potential. Tests provide information on student level of achievement useful for curriculum development and evaluation. A successful testing service should show evidence of research on testing requirements, selection of appropriate tests, adequate facilities and staff for test administration, for curriculum development and change, and periodic evaluation of testing services.

Personal Counseling: Counselors work with students to help them understand and deal with immediate and future problems. Through the counselor's guidance, exploration of alternatives to problems may be examined in a non-evaluating manner, and the counselor acts as a facilitator for the student's

decision-making process. It should be noted that personal, career and educational counseling many times overlap, since in order to counsel a student effectively, the counselor has to be aware of his/her personal needs, interests, and feelings.

Counselors often refer students to other agencies when appropriate. Some community colleges have arranged for psychiatric services as part of the student personnel services offerings.

Group Counseling: One method of offering group counseling or advising is through a number of group experiences. One method of group experience and guidance are courses offered for credit which are primarily designed to provide information. These courses are sometimes called Career Planning, Personal and Social Development, Guidance, etc.

AREAS OF CONCERN IN COUNSELING, GUIDANCE, AND STUDENT PLACEMENT

The 1980 California Community College Occupational Programs Evaluation System gave top priority to the functions of student follow-up, use of student follow-up information, and student placement effectiveness. In-service education, data on labor market needs, and the need for liaison with business, government and the community were listed a strong second. In the categories just mentioned, counseling and guidance services with an in-service component had a strong emphasis.

To reinforce what has been described above, there is a theme "replayed" each year at the California Community College Administrators of Occupational Education conference: 1) a need to know more about the success of students, 2) a need for more recent and more accurate labor market information, 3) a need for a system to assist both counselors and faculty to keep current,

and 4) a need to articulate all education from grades 7 through 14.

The problem was driven home by information from a post-Proposition 13 survey of the then 101 California Community College Deans of Counseling. The report indicated that cutbacks had occurred in 87 percent of the colleges. Only 41 percent of the respondents had an opportunity to participate in the cutbacks. Twenty-six percent suffered cutbacks in the counseling staff, while 34 percent suffered cutbacks in the clerical staff. Recently, one large community college abolished counseling and instituted the advisor system.

Sample comments from the study included the following:

> It is more important to establish that the counselor may be the most significant educator with whom a student may come in contact and as such deserves significant support in funding, resources, and as a voice in educational decision making.

> There seems to be a tendency to underestimate the impact and need for counseling services in a community college. In addition, the clientele has changed markedly in the last decade. With the impact of older women, veterans, adult job trainees, minorities, and the disadvantaged, the need for counseling has increased and the scope of counseling has broadened.

There are two pressing issues in the area of counseling, guidance and student placement: 1) how best to assist today's student to survive in a high technology world of tightening job markets, selective academic programs and increasingly complex educational offerings, and 2) how this counseling, guidance and placement function can survive amid downward spiralizing budgets and increased emphasis on accountability. The counselor on one hand is attempting to encourage students to develop an identity, vocationally and personally, while at the same time, seeking to establish a professional identity within the college community.

It is with this backdrop that the remainder of this paper is presented.

SPECIFIC REACTIONS AS THEY RELATE TO COUNSELING, GUIDANCE AND PLACEMENT SERVICES

Certain data, inferences and conclusions in the State Longitudinal Study go hand-in-hand with some of the issues and short range and long range policy questions that remain unanswered in all of community college education. It is the concern here to relate them to counseling, guidance and placement services. The following areas that will be discussed in detail later are listed below in short form.

1. Retention of Students.
2. Assessment Programs.
3. Student Job Placement.
4. Counselor In-Service Education.
5. Student Prototypes.
6. Sampling Statistics.
7. Vocational Curriculum.
8. Summary of the Recommendations.

INFERENCES/GENERALIZATIONS

Retention of Students. Traditionally community colleges, as open door institutions, have maintained relatively high drop-out rates. High attrition, until recently, has not been considered a serious problem. Rather, attrition has been considered a basic assumption of the institution. This picture has changed due to changes in computing reimbursement to colleges, decreasing numbers of potential college students and the high cost of education. Many institutions are now studying student retention as a

means of increasing the enrollment and decreasing the cost of education.

In the SLS study, a plurality of students (40 percent) indicated that they plan to attend their college occasionally. Of the non-attendees, 49 percent plan to return and take more classes at the community college. (It's surprising that 38 percent of the non-attendees felt they had met their goals completely.)

It is difficult to believe that in one semester less than 40 percent of the non-attendees have met their goals. It might be well to assume that the students' experience at the various colleges was not an unpleasant one and thus the answer was a socially acceptable one.

Even if we accept high drop-out rates as a normal process, there are a number of areas that can be studied that may decrease attrition:

1. Experiment with and develop a system of differentiated counseling whereby students have a choice of a variety of ways of being inducted into the college.
2. Determine if fully matriculated students have a higher retention rate than those not fully matriculated.
3. Develop an accurate, up-to-date career information system and decision-making system.
4. Develop on-going workshop courses for students who have specific needs.
    a. values clarification
    b. study skills
    c. job seeking skills to include resume development and the job interview
    d. excessive anxiety

e. assertiveness training

f. reentry and nontraditional programs

g. vocational exploration

5. Experiment with special counseling programs for probationary and dismissed students.

6. Develop a counseling program for students experiencing emotional problems.

7. When all else fails, develop a system of exit interviews to help determine why students drop school.

8. Follow-up the student who never says goodbye--the "walk away."

Differentiated Counseling Programs

The fact that day and evening students constitute different populations has been an area of controversy in the community colleges. The Statewide Longitudinal Study concludes that day and evening students constitute two populations. Most of the differences arise from age differences. Evening students are older, probably more mature, have different goals and have had more work experience. This would lead one to conclude that counseling guidance and placement services should be different for the two populations. These findings were confirmed in a study recently completed at American River College.

It would seem logical to study some of the following areas for consideration:

1. Emphasize reentry counseling and reentry classes more in the evening than in the day program.
2. Specifically employ evening college counseling specialists who have acquired special insights to problems of the evening clientel.

3. Develop self-counseling materials with emphasis on the evening student.
4. Develop courses and programs in the curriculum that have realistic timelines for evening college students.
5. Where possible, consider open-entry, open-exit designed curriculum.
6. Emphasize group counseling sessions.

Assessment Programs

Someone once said, "If you don't know where you're going, you might end up somewhere else." In the Statewide Longitudinal Study, only 51 percent of the students stated they had specific goals. It was also stated that in all probability, vocational students and instructors are very close together in their understanding of the goals of vocational education instruction. In liberal arts courses the student may not understand the goals of instruction, and/or the instructor does not explain the need or importance of the course.

One prominent educator recently stated that assessment of students has become a "hot topic of discussion" throughout the country in recent years due to the increasing number of students entering college with academic skills below those necessary to succeed in a regular program. Pre-enrollment assessment of students has given counselors the information they need to advise students on the classes and programs best suited for their goals and abilities. He also stated that one of the challenges facing all community colleges is the wide range of academic abilities of entering students.

Diagnostic tools and self-evaluation have become increasingly important in a society where educational cost factors are rapidly increasing and money for educational resources are rapidly decreasing. The question is really two-fold: Can we or can we not afford student assessment? We need to "screen" students into courses and programs that best suit their aspirations, abilities, personalities and interests. The purpose, it should be noted, would be to "screen in" not "screen out."

It would seem logical that the value of implementing an assessment program would more than offset the cost and insure the proper placement and progression of students into programs where they will succeed and persist.

The assessment center concept ties in with student retention, reentry, and other concepts.

Student Job Placement

No mention is made in the study of how students were placed on jobs or how they gained their employment. Fifty-five percent work full-time and 45 percent work part-time. Initially, between 50 and 60 percent earned hourly salary wages, in the $2.00 to $4.50 range. By the academic year 1979-80, this figure was reduced to 48 percent and further reduced to 45 percent by the end of the study. The top salary would gross $720 per month.

Initially, 61 percent of the vocational students and 78 percent of the non-vocational students were working in jobs not related to their classes.

It would seem logical if we are to spend large sums of money to offer training programs, we need a vehicle to get them into jobs that reflect their training.

In the counseling and guidance function of the community college, there is a need for student job placement. The following is suggested.

1. Assist students in locating positions appropriate to their skills and interests. Employment placement services should be closely coordinated with public and private placement agencies to avoid unnecessary duplication and to improve services. Seminars in job seeking techniques may be offered as a means of helping students acquire skills in placement interviews and in preparing application forms. Students may have saleable skills, but lack the skill to sell them.
2. Encourage on-campus visits by prospective employers and provide them with accurate up-to-date information on students seeking employment. The staff needs to know local employment opportunities, as well as make the community aware of the talents being developed at the colleges.
3. Cooperate with the financial aid program in encouraging and establishing appropriate on-campus part-time employment opportunities for students.
4. Cooperate with faculty members in vocational and technical curriculums in implementing placement functions for career students, including cooperative work experience programs.
5. Develop a library of placement information including relevant periodicals, files of specific job opportunities, and general career requirements. Faculty, student personnel workers, and students need accurate, up-to-date information describing occupational trends in our society.

Counselor In-Service Education

By the very nature of counselor preparation, counselors are academically oriented. They are not adequately prepared to effectively deal with the ever increasing numbers of students enrolled in occupation education. In the Statewide Longitudinal Study, generally 50 percent of the students were vocationally oriented. The other 50 percent were transfer oriented; however, when majors are grouped by prototype function, 35.6 percent were transfer, 35.5 were vocational, and 26.6 were special interest. It should be noted that 21.8 percent of the transfer majors were technical majors. This means that counselors had the least preparation for the largest proportion of students.

There is a continuing need to develop in-service programs for counselors and other appropriate staff in order to meet the growing needs of vocational students in the community college. A program would help personnel acquire a working knowledge in the following areas:

1. Apprenticeship programs in operation in their labor market area: a) where to apply, b) length of time, c) starting salaries, d) journeymen salaries, and e) benefits.
2. Vocational programs at their college: a) objectives, b) course content, c) student enrollment, d) student placement, and e) community involvement.
3. A general knowledge of vocational programs offered in feeder high schools and Regional Occupational Programs and how they articulate with their college programs.
4. A general knowledge of technology programs offered at four-year institutions and how they articulate with their programs.

5. Labor market information, immediate and projected, in their labor market area in particular; state-wide labor market trends.
6. Functions of counseling support services at the college: a) Career Information Center, b) Career Placement Center, c) outreach programs, d) student recruitment, e) student retention, f) programs for students with limited English speaking ability, and g) programs for handicapped and disadvantaged students.

Student Prototypes

The prototype method provides a useful supplement to the SAM system. It does several things:

1. It separates the Technical Transfer student from transfer majors.
2. It separates Leisure Skill students, some of which take occupationally oriented courses for non-occupational reasons.
3. It avoids the "Leaver" and "Completer" judgemental trap because it establishes that many leavers leave for the most positive reasons--they met their goals.
4. It establishes that many students have vocational goals that do not require program completion.

The student prototype system has intrinsic value as does any taxonomy system. As an adjunct to SAM, it makes the whole system more meaningful. The system has several implications for counseling, guidance, and placement:

1. If Technical Transfer curricula are articulated, counselors know immediately what both the general education requirements and the major requirements are for that student. The articulation agreements should be formalized and, in essence, be a valid contract between the two institutions.
2. With this system, counselors are made aware that when a student leaves a vocational program that is not necessarily bad news. One vocational administrator used to say that leavers were probably the best students in the program and they left because they couldn't refuse the good job offer. This statement may be true of skill programs such as office occupations and trade and industrial occupations, but in many of the technical occupations such as computer science and electronics, the AA degree is required by industry.

All in all, the student prototype system does add depth to the understanding of what the functions of the community college should be. However, like every classification system, individuals within the system must be dealt with on an individual basis.

Sampling Statistics

Objective four, "to provide information about the feasibility of using a small sample longitudinal study for supplying data to state and federal agencies for reporting purposes and for providing individual community colleges with a model to use in answering questions of a local nature," was met during the first year of the study.

Although this objective does not have a direct relationship to counseling, guidance, and placement, there is a great deal of time, money and energy spent in reporting and working toward compliance to state and federal rules and regulations at the local level. Follow-up studies completed at one college following all graduates, all certificate earners, and a sampling of achievers yielded the same results year after year ($n = 12$), confirming the hypothesis that this could be done as well with less expense using sampling techniques.

Vocational Curriculum

It is stated in the study that the most frequent function the community college performs for vocational students is preparation for their first career job. Approximately 65 percent of the students took courses related to their jobs and 73 percent found the courses at least helpful on the job. In another portion of the study, it is emphasized as was above, that day and evening college students constitute different populations. Counselors must know the curriculum as a whole more than anyone else on the staff. They deal with all functions of the college. If this is true, then the following are recommendations that are implied by the study:

1. Where necessary, modify the curriculum in vocational education so that the programs in the day and evening are differentiated.
2. Develop short term skill classes in vocational education that have no prerequisites where job skills are taught up front.

3. Develop these new and/or modified curriculum with those who are the employers. The primary concern of advisory committees is to give advice and that advice should be heeded.
4. Colleges might consider converting leisure courses on a pay-as-you-go community service basis.
5. Colleges should consider expanding cooperative work experience programs.
6. The community college system should experiment with these short term, open-entry, open-exit skill classes so that skill training, orientation to college, reentry programs, and certain introductory classes are available at any time to the student, not just at the quarter or semester.

SUMMARY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges should study the credentialling of community college counselors. By the nature of the present credentialling system, counselors must be academically oriented. By the nature of their jobs and the make-up of the student body, they must be vocationally oriented. Perhaps a bachelor's degree with an additional year of training would be more appropriate. Of the 30 units prescribed during the additional year, one-half might be career related, with the other half in counseling psychology.
2. There should be further study of the student prototypes with a recommendation to consider altering Title V to include at least

the most prominent prototypes as functions of the community college.

3. Different ways of computing ADA should be studied. The cost of bringing students into the system who don't make the first census week are enormous. The cost is even greater for those who leave before the second census week. Possibly choosing one week would be a better indicator than the average of the fourth and eleventh weeks.
4. Consideration should be given to the development of open-entry, open-exit, self-paced classes. In addition, in both academic and vocational courses, short term classes should be considered so that students have at least two entry points each semester.
5. The feasibility of offering certain leisure classes on a pay-as-you-go basis should be carefully studied.
6. Short term vocational curriculum with job skills up front should be developed.
7. In some programs, different curriculum for day and evening should be developed.
8. Do additional research on the walk-away student. This student doesn't check out, speak up, etc. He/she just disappears.
9. Develop a differentiated counseling program where students have more than one way to enter the various colleges.
10. Develop an easy to follow, small sample, longitudinal model that can be used by the community colleges throughout the state.
11. Develop an articulation model, particularly in vocational

education, that will facilitate students' mobility from grades 7 through 16 (Bachelor's level).

12. Develop a model for the in-service education of counselors.

The writer realizes that this paper and these recommendations are but a small portion of the implications for counseling, guidance, and student placement in the Statewide Longitudinal Study.

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